

Dear Chief Tidwell,

Thank you for reading my letter. My concerns address an issue I never hear discussed in the public meetings and hearings I have attended on the Shoshone Forest Management Plan.

In short, it is so important to provide reasonable access to wild and remote stretches of forest for those of us who desire (even need) wilderness experiences but do not have the physical stamina to backpack extensively, do not own horses, or for travelers, do not have adequate time to experience true wilderness. The East Fork, Wiggins Fork, Horse Creek and Bear Creek drainages north-east of Dubois, as they are presently managed, fill this bill perfectly. The 40,000 acres of this area that the revised management plan changes to year-around motorized will destroy this exceedingly valuable characteristic of this incredible area.

Sir, have you personally visited this part of the Shoshone Forest? It is amazingly remote and unspoiled, while still being moderately accessible by car. It offers spectacular views, abundant wildlife and the solitude that our increasingly stressful world necessitates relief from. I am a 65 year old woman and I can (and often do) drive the few roads that penetrate this vast area. Hunting season excepted, I often see no other car or person all day long once I pass the Bitterroot Ranch. What I do see are elk, moose, grizzly and black bears, even wolves. My son can add mountain lions (2) to that list. Because this area is so wild and unpeopled so much of the year, the animals are not as wary and reclusive as they are in other parts of the forest. The habitat is safe and secure for them and it is important that it remain that way, without the intrusion of motorized recreational off-road vehicles. Elk and moose calve here in the spring, grizzlies roam the entire area and wolves are frequently heard and seen here. Please, Chief Tidwell, if you can, keep the current non-motorized backcountry designation in place.

Since economic concerns so often drive decisions in our world, I would propose that having wild, remote areas where even tourists can get a rare taste of wilderness in a one day, spectacular drive, has economic value to communities like Dubois and to our state. Many of the same arguments that support wilderness designation, support keeping the East and Wiggins Fork and Bear and Horse Creek drainages free of noisy, stinky 4-wheelers and snowmobiles.

My plea also includes maintaining the current 50 acres of the Lean-to Creek drainage as back country non-motorized, not allowing timber sales, for the same reasons already outlined. A short walk from the trailhead at the end of the East Fork Road, always produces bear sign and several times I've been privileged to observe the bears overturning rocks and uprooting plants, procuring food. Lean-to's proximity to the Washakie Wilderness and its obvious use by bears makes it an important part of their secure habitat range.

As a Wyoming native with a deep appreciation for solitude, for wild and remote areas, I treasure this area of the Shoshone. I hope so much you are able to protect the unique qualities of the truly exceptional area encompassed in the East Fork and Wiggins Fork drainages, Horse Creek, Bear Creek and Lean-to Creek drainages. Thank you very much.

Sherry Shelley

